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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 000092

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#) [KI](#) [SR](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: MANAGING GREECE ON KOSOVO AND MACEDONIA

REF: A. SKOPJE 0032

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 0017
[1](#)C. ATHENS 0021

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Managing Greece over the next few months is likely to be difficult on the key Balkan issues of Macedonia and Kosovo. To leverage Greek behavior we should:

-- Engage the Greeks on Kosovo and Serbia, including through extending an invitation to them to participate in international structures for dealing with Kosovo and asking them to lead some efforts to support Serbia's transition;

-- Develop a coordinated message from partners -- ideally the Quint -- and from high-level U.S. officials that highlights the consequences of Greek behavior for regional stability;

-- take steps with Skopje to encourage progress in the Nimetz process; and

-- Avoid linkages between Greek behavior on Kosovo and Macedonia with unrelated Greek desiderata that could prove counterproductive. End Summary

High Stakes

[1](#)2. (C) U.S./Greek relations are never frictionless or serene, but the coming months have the potential to be especially difficult. Our paths on two critical related issues -- Macedonia and Kosovo -- diverge; we need to influence Greece to play a more constructive role on both issues. This cable lays out Embassy Athens' thinking on how to do that, particularly during FM Bakoyannis, mid-February visit to Washington.

[1](#)3. (C) Bringing economic and political stability to the Balkans is one of our highest policy priorities in Europe. Greece has been an uneven partner in this endeavor, responding positively in some areas -- such as providing troops for NATO's Kosovo Force and the EU Force in Bosnia, and in promoting trade and investment in the region -- but not on our terms in others. On the two large Balkan issues pending this Spring, we diverge.

-- Kosovo: The Greeks are disquieted by the prospect of Kosovo's independence over Serbia's objections. Greek antipathy largely stems from a knee-jerk affinity for the

Serbian position (based, among other things, on Orthodox solidarity), but also from concerns of a possible negative precedent for Cyprus and a possible reactionary response in Serbia that could destabilize the region. We lay out the counterarguments every chance we get, but have not been able to sway the opinions of the public or policy makers. That said, the current Greek stance can probably best be described as a discomfited lack of resistance. The Greeks are not taking steps to stymie EU decision making on a Rule of Law Mission, they have pledged substantial personnel to the EU Rule of Law Mission, they have pledged to maintain their force levels in KFOR, they have provided staff for the International Civilian Office (ICO), and they have also told us that they will not block decisions on Kosovo in any of the relevant international fora (OSCE, UN, EU). They aren't enthusiastic, but they will not be spoilers. However, a post-UDI Kosovo will require friends in the region who are committed to its success, political stability, and economic growth. And Greece can play a helpful role in mitigating further self-inflicted wounds in Serbia and help them on the path to integration.

-- Macedonia: Even more troubling is Greece's expressed (and sincere) intent to block a NATO invitation to Macedonia, absent an agreed solution on the name. Although this would be contrary to Greece's obligations under the 1995 U.S.-brokered Interim Accord, the Greeks have made abundantly clear that this decision is firm. We share Embassy Skopje's ref A assessment that a Greek veto would be highly negative for Macedonia, for regional stability, and also for Greece's hope of eventually reaching an agreement on the issue.

Influencing the Greeks

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14. (C) In the near term, we need to exercise our influence on the Greeks to get them in a better place on both issues. We recommend the following:

-- Coordinated Messages from Partners: Although the U.S. and UK have engaged with the Greeks on these issues, we do not see indications that our other partners have. We believe it important that the Greeks hear from Allies beyond the U.S. and the UK of the consequences of Greece's policies for regional stability. Such messages would have the most impact if delivered jointly -- a Quint approach to the Greeks on Kosovo and Macedonia would be optimal.

Our messages should include the following points on Macedonia:

- o Support for the Interim Accord and expectation that Greece will comply with its obligations and evaluate Macedonia on NATO's performance based standards and not block an invitation as "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" should it meet those standards;

- o Statement that we are encouraging Skopje and Athens to engage seriously now in the Nimetz process;

- o Encouragement for Greece to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of blocking Macedonia's entry into NATO, including thinking through how a post-veto scenario would bring this long standing issue closer to resolution; and

- o Assurances that the Quint will not accept a "wear them down" strategy from Skopje, but will continue to press for a mutually acceptable resolution for as long as it takes.

The last point is particularly important as senior Greek officials are convinced that GOM leaders are not interested in accepting a composite name for international organizations and would use an invitation to NATO membership without a final resolution as a way to further kick the ball down the

road while they chip away at any remaining resistance to their constitutional name.

-- Balkans and Regional Role: The Greeks consider themselves a key player in the Balkans. They want to be part of any/all multilateral structures working in the region. We should consider inviting them to participate in the steering board for the International Civilian Office in Kosovo, even absent rapid recognition of an independent Kosovo. We should also find other ways to involve the Greeks in broader considerations of stability in the Balkans and other regions.

-- Serbia Handlers: Although PM Karamanlis is not generally motivated by additional responsibilities, we believe he and FM Bakoyannis would be receptive to U.S. and European requests to engage with Belgrade on behalf of the international community, in the lead up to and the aftermath of Kosovo independence. The Greeks are proud of their "special relationship" with Serbia. Although the Greeks will likely not be objective in dealing with Serbia, we do believe they would faithfully convey concerns from the international community to Belgrade and vice versa and could play a important and useful role in leading a "friends of"-like effort in the aftermath of a UDI to emphasize the international community's interest in Serbia's future. This would provide the PM and FM with some cover with the public in the face of the difficult and unpopular political decisions they will need to take with respect to Macedonia and Kosovo.

-- High-Level Encounters: We note Embassy Skopje's ref B recommendation for a White House meeting in March by Macedonian PM Gruevski. In the zero-sum calculations of the region, we should consider a concomitant gesture to the Greeks. We note that the President has traditionally received a senior Greek official in Washington for the March 25 Greek Independence Day, and we should extend an invitation to PM Karamanlis to be that official this year. Such a visit should not be limited to the Macedonian issue, but cover the range of "strategic partnership" issues the President and Prime Minister covered in their last meeting in March 2005.

-- Nimetz Process: The continued public drumbeat vis-a-vis Macedonia's name/NATO prospects has led many Greeks to see much of their broader relationship with the West through this prism. Therefore, any progress that could be achieved would not only pay large benefits related to Macedonia, but would also spill over into other areas. We therefore support Embassy Skopje's (ref A) suggestion to press Skopje to propose a formula that goes beyond Skopje's current "dual

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15. (C) We recommend we avoid establishing linkages between Greek behavior on Macedonia or Kosovo with Greek desiderata on unrelated issues on the grounds that it is likely to be counterproductive. A U.S. effort to link Greece's desire to participate in the visa waiver program with Greek behavior on Macedonia (or Kosovo) is likely to reinforce Greek determination to veto Macedonian entry into NATO. The Greek leadership would see this as an unacceptable threat from the West, and PM Karamanlis could only take the position of standing up against "unacceptable" U.S. pressure to maintain Greece's position of principle. The Greeks may be able to be talked quietly down from their tree, but they won't be threatened or ordered down.

16. (C) Likewise we will need to reflect carefully on the consequences we establish for Greece should it fulfill its threats. We will need to bear in mind that the manner in which we react can and will influence follow-on developments.

It is important our response not further complicate the continuing need for Greece's cooperation in supporting stability in the Balkans and the possibility of the two sides eventually reaching a compromise on the name issue, no matter how remote that might seem at the time. We still have many strategic interests in Greece that we need to keep in mind, including the use of the deep water port and air field at

Souda Bay -- our key military logistics hub in the Eastern Mediterranean -- and the Port of Thessaloniki as a key route for transit of goods to Kosovo and the Balkans.
SPECKHARD